

Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International
Relations Committee - Blue Cross written evidence

Summary

- Blue Cross is a member of the Cut the Chase coalition, along with Dogs Trust, Greyhound Rescue Wales, Hope Rescue and the RSPCA. Our coalition has been working towards an end to greyhound racing in Wales since 2022 to protect the relevant dogs from injury and death.
- As a coalition, we strongly support the Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill as it brings us closer to ending greyhound racing in Wales.
- The coalition is calling for greyhound racing to be ended in Wales within 12 months of the passing of the relevant legislation, rather than in the timeframe currently specified in the Bill.

Wales has no greyhound specific regulation and although it's one remaining track is now licensed by the GBGB, we are clear that licensing is not the answer. It does not solve the issue at the heart of the industry and cannot protect dogs from the inherent risk of racing. We strongly believe that the industry is a long way from ensuring the welfare of all the dogs involved in racing. Progress has not been made quickly enough, or on a big enough scale, to protect the welfare of these dogs. Therefore, we believe that the only option to safeguard greyhound welfare is to pass the Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill.

The Valley Track

The Valley track in Ystrad Mynach is the only operational greyhound track in Wales. It became a licensed GBGB track in 2023. As the Valley was an independent track up until that year, there was no requirement to disclose injury, euthanasia or rehoming figures. However, between 2018 and 2021, Hope Rescue's Amazing Greys project helped over 200 racing greyhounds whose owners and/or trainers had links with the Valley. Of these dogs, 40 endured serious, career ending injuries such as severe fractures needing significant veterinary treatment, amputation or orthopaedic repair.

An inherently dangerous sport

Greyhound racing is inherently dangerous for the dogs involved. Curved tracks are dangerous because of the forces they exert on the dogs while negotiating the bend, but they also cause areas of congestion which increase the risk of high speed collisions. The first bend is particularly problematic as it tends to be where the most congestion occurs, where dogs are travelling the fastest and where most incidents are recorded.

While race tracks are typically referred to as oval in shape, the shape of the Valley's track is considered unique with a layout described as rectangular with four rounded corners. It is stated that greyhound welfare is absolutely paramount within licensed racing. However, the scientific evidence in relation to improved track design does not appear to be adopted when opportunity arises. For example, in moving from an independent to a licensed track, the Valley could have been upgraded from an oval shape to one which avoids high injury rates. This was not done, and the track remains the same shape.

Injury and Fatality Statistics

The industry's own statistics provide the most reliable evidence as to why an end to greyhound racing is needed to protect animal welfare. According to the latest statistics¹ from the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) published in June 2025, 346 dogs involved in racing died for reasons other than natural causes/illness in 2024, while 3,809 injuries were also recorded. For the first time since the publication of these statistics began, the number of track fatalities increased, with 123 dogs having died at tracks licensed by GBGB - up from 105 the previous year.

While this data covers tracks in both Wales and England - with GBGB regulating 19 at present - they are the first set of statistics that cover a full year of racing at the Valley Greyhound Stadium in Ystrad Mynach since it became regulated by GBGB. However, there is no injury data publicly

¹ GBGB 2018 - 2024 Injury / Retirement Data <https://gbgb-prod-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/26104723/2018-2024-Injury-Retirement-Summary-FINAL.pdf>

available for the Valley track as even those tracks governed by GBGB do not publicly display or release injury data by racetrack, outcomes of licensing inspections or residential kennel audits. Additionally, no evidence is provided to demonstrate how such information is collated and informs industry development to ensure meaningful changes are made.

The level of suffering caused by greyhound racing, and the risks posed, are significant and must be considered unacceptable, especially when greyhound racing is a leisure activity. Furthermore, we would also argue that the cost of regulation cannot be justified when the risk to welfare outweighs any potential positive benefit.

These stark and disturbing statistics provide irrefutable evidence that racing around oval tracks at speeds of around 40mph is inherently dangerous, with serious consequences for dog welfare clear to see.

A declining industry

Greyhound racing is also a declining industry, both in the UK and abroad. In the 1940s, there were 77 licensed tracks and more than 200 independent tracks in the UK. The numbers have steadily declined to 19 regulated and one independent track on which greyhounds race in January 2024. Mark Ruskell MSP has introduced the Greyhound Racing (Offences) (Scotland) Bill in the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government has recently announced² that it supports the Bill's general principles.

Internationally, New Zealand³ announced its plans to ban greyhound racing shortly before the Welsh Government, with its government having recently confirmed that it will legislate on the closure of the greyhound racing industry by July 31st, 2026. In August 2025, Tasmania also confirmed its intention to phase out the activity, with its premier having recently vowed

² Letter from Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, to the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, 29 August 2025 <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/rural-affairs-and-islands-committee/correspondence/2025/greyhound-racing-offences-scotland-bill-29-aug-2025.pdf>

³ <https://english.news.cn/asiapacific/20250820/65fe67045db14236a923347e2186a9bd/c.html>

to end greyhound racing in the state by 2029.⁴ A relevant Private Members Bill⁵ was also laid in New South Wales in February this year.

As it stands, Wales is currently among only a small handful of countries where commercial greyhound racing still takes place, including all other UK nations, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and just one state in the USA - West Virginia. In the USA, commercial greyhound racing is illegal in 44 states while countries such as Mexico, China and Vietnam no longer have operational tracks.

Although the Valley track is now licensed by the GBGB, we are clear that licensing is not the answer. It does not solve the issue at the heart of the industry and cannot protect dogs from the inherent risk of racing. That is why legislation is needed to ban the activity.

Implementation Group

Blue Cross welcomed the creation of the Implementation Group and is represented on the Group via our colleagues at Hope Rescue and the RSPCA who are representing the Cut the Chase coalition. We continue to support its work to ensure that the Bill is enacted in the most efficient and comprehensive manner, ensuring the health and welfare of all the greyhounds currently involved in racing in Wales.

The Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill

Scope

In its current form, an offence is committed if a person (a) is an operator of a stadium or similar venue in Wales and uses it, or knowingly permits it to be used, for greyhound racing, or (b) is involved in organising greyhound racing in Wales. It does not, therefore, include individuals attending any such meeting.

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2025/aug/10/tasmanian-premier-vows-to-end-greyhound-racing-as-he-woos-crossbench-to-back-minority-government>

⁵ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/bills/Pages/bill-details.aspx?pk=18622>

We welcome the fact that the Bill also prohibits the training and trialling of greyhounds around tracks for racing purposes as this is also classed as ‘greyhound racing’. This is particularly positive as the schooling of greyhounds around tracks for racing purposes carries the same inherent risks as racing on a commercial basis.

Blue Cross does not believe a ban on greyhound racing in Wales would lead to the activity moving ‘underground’ with illegal races being conducted. The very structure of the greyhound racing industry means that if banned it would be very hard to continue illegally. The business of greyhound racing is heavily reliant on the streaming of racing both in the UK and abroad. Once illegal, the betting industry could no longer support greyhound racing meaning a loss of significant income and the incentive for people to participate. Furthermore, the significant infrastructure and resources needed for greyhound racing, such as a large oval track, would be hard to move ‘underground’ and go unnoticed by authorities. There is little evidence to support the theory that greyhound racing will move ‘underground’ and is not, in our opinion, a valid reason to not take steps to protect the welfare of racing greyhounds in Wales.

Timeframe

The Bill states that it must be brought into force on a day that is (a) no sooner than 1 April 2027, and (b) no later than 1 April 2030. As the members of our coalition and others across the animal welfare sector are actively prepared to rehome the dogs affected, we question whether such a long timeframe is necessary.

To support the rehoming, rehabilitation and treatment of any dogs impacted by the end of greyhound racing in Wales, the Wales Greyhound Partnership (WGP) was established shortly after the ban was announced in February. The WGP comprises nine animal welfare organisations - including our coalition’s members - and at this current time has the capacity to rehome up to 258 dogs. With 120 dogs rehomed since its conception, the partnership has clearly demonstrated that it is highly possible to rehome dogs affected by the ban in a much shorter time period than the legislation would allow for. Furthermore, this window is much greater than that provided for other tracks closed by the industry. For

example, the closure of Swindon was announced in March 2025, with racing to cease at the end of December 2025. **As such, our coalition is actively calling for greyhound racing to be ended in Wales within 12 months of the passing of the relevant legislation.**

It is our view that such a timeframe will enable the dogs affected to be treated, rehomed and rehabilitated by ourselves in a safe and realistic manner, while minimising the harm racing poses to dogs. Inevitably, the longer that racing continues legally in Wales, the more dogs that will be put at risk of injury, or worse. A timeframe which could enable racing to continue on a legal basis for up to four years will see racing stocks replenished on a repeat basis, putting more animals at risk as well as additional pressure on the rescue sector. This is especially relevant in relation to plans which could see the number of races the Valley Greyhound Stadium expanded before the ban.

However, ending greyhound racing within a year of the Act being passed will give both the rescue sector and industry a definitive deadline to work towards, which should simplify the implementation of the ban for all.

Sanctions/penalties

As it stands, a person found guilty of an offence under the Bill would be liable on summary conviction (i.e. those that can only be heard by a Magistrates' Court) to a fine. The Explanatory Note specifies an unlimited fine. It is important that the penalties relevant to the legislation act as enough of a deterrent to prevent racing from continuing on an illegal basis while also minimising the risk of any potential repeat offences.

Conclusion

Blue Cross warmly welcomes the publication of the Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill. With the evidence in favour of an end to greyhound racing and strong support for such action, we urge the Senedd to support the proposed legislation as it passes through the relevant legislative stages. Wales has demonstrated its ability to be a world leader on animal welfare on several occasions – it was the first UK nation to have introduced full bans on shock collars for dogs, snares and glue traps. This

Bill is a real opportunity to add greyhound racing to this list of achievements before 2026's election and truly demonstrate that animal welfare is a priority for Wales on a global scale.

We therefore call on all to support the Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill to prevent the needless injury to and deaths of countless dogs in the coming years.